Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims as shown in the following listing of claims, which will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1.-28. (Canceled)

29. (New) A polypeptide comprising the amino acid sequence:

$X_1X_2X_3X_4X_5X_6SWSNKSX_7X_8X_9X_{10}X_{11}$ (I),

wherein X_1, X_2, X_3, X_5, X_6, X_7, X_9, X_{10}, and X_{11} mean, independently one from each other, any amino acid residue, X_4 means any amino acid residue except A and W, and wherein X_8 means any amino acid residue except E and S.

30. (New) The polypeptide of claim 29, further defined as comprising the amino acid sequence:

PWASNASWSNKSLDDIW (II).

31. (New) The polypeptide of claim 29, consisting of the amino acid sequence:
PWASNASWSNKSLDDIW (II).

32. (New) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a ligand compound which specifically binds to a polypeptide of claim 29 and at least one physiologically acceptable excipient, wherein the ligand is comprised in an effective amount to prevent or treat a disease linked to the infection of an individual with a virus of the HIV family.

33. (New) The pharmaceutical composition of claim 32, wherein said ligand compound comprises an antibody directed to the polypeptide of claim 29.

34. (New) A pharmaceutical composition comprising an antigenic compound comprising a polypeptide of claim 29 in combination with at least one physiologically acceptable excipient in an amount effective to treat a cancer.

35. (New) A composition comprising a polypeptide of claim 29 and at least one physiologically acceptable excipient in an amount effective to illicit an immune response.

36. (New) A vaccine composition comprising a polypeptide of claim 29 and an immunoadjuvant.

37. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 36, wherein said antigenic compound comprises from 2 to 12 peptides of formula SWSNKS.

38. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 37, wherein said antigenic compound has the formula (III):

NH_2-PepNt-$[(I)_n$-$PepX_n]_n$-PepCt- COOH (III),

wherein:

"PepNt" consists of a polypeptide having an amino acid length varying from 0 to 100 amino acid residues and is located at the N-terminal end of the polypeptide of formula (III);

"$[(I)_n$-$PepX_n]$" consists of a polypeptide unit wherein:

"$(I)_1$" to - "$(I)_n$" each consist of, one independently from each other, a polypeptide of formula "SWSNKS", with n being an integer from 1 to 12; and

"$PepX_1$" to "$PepX_n$" each consist of, one independently from the other, a spacer polypeptide having an amino acid length varying from 0 to 30 amino acid residues, with n being an integer from 1 to 12;

n is the number of $[(I)_n$-$PepX_n]$ polypeptide units in said polypeptide, with n being an integer from 1 to 12; and

"PepCt" consists of a polypeptide having an amino acid length varying from 0 to 100 amino acid residues and located at the C-terminal end of the polypeptide of formula (III).

39. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 36, wherein the immunoadjuvant compound is Freund complete adjuvant, Freund incomplete adjuvant, aluminum hydroxide, calcium phosphate, aluminum phosphate, potassium phosphate, Cholera toxin (CT) and/or its B subunit (CTB), a toxin from *Bordetella pertusssis* (PT), labile toxin (LT) from *Escherichia coli*, monophosphoryl lipid A, a CpG oligonucleotide, an imidazoquinolone, an oil in water emulsion comprising squalene and/or synthetic copolymer, a muramyl dipeptide and/or muramyl dipeptide derivative, a saponin, an immunostimulating complex (ISCOM), and/or dimethyldioctadecylammonium bromide or chloride (DDA).

40. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 36, wherein said antigenic compound is covalently linked through an amino acid residue to a carrier protein or to a synthetic polymer.

41. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 40, wherein said carrier protein is selected from the group consisting of keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH), bovine serum albumin, or diphtheria toxoid.

42. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 40, wherein said synthetic polymer is a multiple branch peptide construction comprising a core matrix comprised of lysine residues.

43. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 40, comprising a spacer between said polypeptide and said carrier protein or synthetic polymer.

44. (New) A vaccine composition comprising a polypeptide comprising the amino acid sequence SWSNKS, said polypeptide being covalently linked through an amino acid residue to a carrier protein or to a synthetic polymer.

45. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 44, wherein said carrier protein is keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH), bovine serum albumin, or diphtheria toxoid.

46. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 44, wherein said synthetic polymer is a multiple branch peptide construction comprising a core matrix comprised of lysine residues.

47. (New) The vaccine composition of claim 44, comprising a spacer between said polypeptide and said carrier protein or synthetic polymer.

48. (New) A method for the *in vitro* screening of compounds for preventing or treating a disease linked with the infection of an individual with an HIV virus, comprising:

incubating a candidate compound to be tested with a polypeptide of claim 29; and

assaying for the binding of the candidate compound to be tested with a polypeptide of claim 29.

49. (New) The method of claim 48, wherein assaying comprises a gel migration assay capable of detecting complexes formed between the candidate compound and a polypeptide of claim 29.

50. (New) A method for the *in vitro* screening of compounds for preventing or treating a disease linked with the infection of an individual with an HIV virus, comprising:

(i) bringing into contact a first CD4+ T-cell culture with a candidate compound, and HIV virus;

(ii) bringing into contact a second CD4+ T-cell culture with HIV virus, in the absence of said candidate compound; and

detecting the presence of NKp44L at the CD4+ T-cells surface issued from the culture (i) and (ii).

51. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising selecting a candidate compound as a therapeutical agent when expression of NKp44L at a CD4+ T-cells surface issued from the culture (ii) is higher than expression of NKp44L at the CD4+ T-cells surface issued from the culture (i).

52. (New) A method for the *in vitro* screening of compounds for preventing or treating a disease linked with the infection of an individual with an HIV virus, comprising:

submitting one or more candidate compounds to a screening method of claim 48; and

submitting a candidate compound positively selected by the method of claim 48 to the screening method of claim 50.

53. (New) A method for the *in vitro* assessment of the progression status of the infection of an individual with an HIV virus, comprising detecting in a sample from said individual, antibodies directed against a polypeptide of claim 29.

54. (New) A method of preventing or treating a disease linked to the infection of an individual with a virus of the HIV family comprising obtaining a ligand compound which specifically binds to a polypeptide of claim 29 and administering the ligand to an individual.

55. (New) A method of making a vaccine composition comprising obtaining a polypeptide of claim 29 and formulating the polypeptide into a vaccine.

56. (New) An antibody directed against a polypeptide of claim 29.